

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-01

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FOR SCSC AND AF/C

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC
SUBJECT: PROTECTION AND WELFARE: DR. DIAN FOSSEY

1. DR. FOSSEY, AMERICAN RESEARCHER WHO FOR PAST ELEVEN YEARS HAS STUDIED MOUNTAIN GORILLAS ON MT. BISOKE IN NORTHEASTERN RWANDA, ADVISED AMBASSADOR EARLIER THIS MONTH THAT ONE OF FEW REMAINING GORILLAS HAD BEEN KILLED AND DECAPITATED BY POACHERS NEAR HER CAMP DECEMBER 31. IN NEAR HYSTERICAL TERMS, FOSSEY THREATENED RETALIATIONS AGAINST RWANDAN HUNTERS AND POACHERS (MOSTLY PYGMIES), ACCUSED RWANDAN PARK SERVICE AND BELGIAN ADVISERS OF DOING NOTHING TO PROTECT GORILLAS, AND DEMANDED THAT PRESIDENT HABYARIMANA TAKE STEPS TO HAVE KILLERS APPREHENDED AND EXECUTED. DR. FOSSEY SENT SIMILAR LETTERS AND TELEGRAM TO VARIOUS RWANDAN AUTHORITIES, INCLUDING PRESIDENT.

2. IN SUBSEQUENT COMMUNICATIONS, DR. FOSSEY REPORTED SHE HAD HERSELF APPREHENDED ONE OF THE ALLEGED KILLERS AND "INTERROGATED" HIM EXTENSIVELY. SHE REFUSED TO TURN HIM OVER TO PARK GUARDS, DEMANDING THAT PRESIDENT SEND MILITARY OFFICERS TO BISOKE TO TAKE CHARGE OF HER PRISONER.

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SHE FINALLY RELEASED HIM TO REPRESENTATIVE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE WHO CLIMBED TO HER 10,000 FOOT RESEARCH STATION EXPLICITLY FOR THIS PURPOSE.

3. IN SUBSEQUENT INCIDENTS, NOT YET ENTIRELY CLEAR TO US, DR. FOSSEY AND HER ASSISTANT HAVE HAD ALTERCATIONS OR WORSE WITH PARK GUARDS AND ARMY SOLDIERS, AS WELL AS A

VIOLENT SCENE WITH SEVERAL BELGIAN TOURISTS WHO, WITH OFFICIAL GUARDS, INTRUDED ON HER STUDIES WITH ONE GORILLA GROUP HERETOFORE EXCLUDED FROM TOURIST CIRCUIT.

4. COMPOUNDING MATTERS, BBC TELEVISION CREW HAS FOR PAST TWO WEEKS BEEN WITH DR. FOSSEY DOING TELEVISION FILM ON HER RESEARCH. DR. FOSSEY HAS INSINUATED, IN HER LETTERS TO RWANDAN OFFICIALS, THAT BBC TEAM WAS DOING AN EXPOSE OF GOR SHORTCOMINGS IN PROTECTING GORILLAS AND MANAGING ITS NATIONAL PARK. JANUARY 16, WHEN CREW FINISHED FILMING AND DESCENDED MOUNTAIN, THEY WERE ARRESTED AND DETAINED OVERNIGHT AT REGIONAL CAPITAL, RUHENGERI, ACCUSED OF FILMING WITHOUT PROPER AUTHORIZATION (PERHAPS TRUE) AND OF DOING "HATCHET JOB" ON RWANDA BASED ON ONE GORILLA'S DEATH (WHICH THEY STOUTLY DENY). BROUGHT TO KIGALI THIS MORNING, THEY WERE FURTHER INTERROGATED, THEN FINALLY RELEASED WITH EXPLANATION IT WAS ALL A MISTAKE.

5. IN REPORT TO AMBASSADOR JUST PRIOR THEIR DEPARTURE FOR TANZANIA, BBC CREW REPORTED THAT DR. FOSSEY WAS PHYSICALLY ILL AND CLOSE TO HYSTERIA. THEY FEARED THAT IN PRESENT PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL STATE DR. FOSSEY MIGHT TAKE IRREVERSABLE STEPS AND FIND HERSELF EXPELLED, IF NOT WORSE. THEY REPORTED THAT IT WAS SHE, IN FACT, WHO WAS PRESENTLY FILMING EXPOSE ON RWANDAN NEGLECT OF GORILLAS, AT CONSIDERABLE PERIL TO HERSELF IN LIGHT OF THEIR OWN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXPERIENCE.

6. AMBASSADOR VISITED DR. FOSSEY AT HER STATION FEW DAYS PRIOR TO DECEMBER 31 INCIDENT AND FOUND HER IN USUAL POOR HEALTH AND DEEPLY ANXIOUS OVER GORILLAS' WELL-BEING, EXPERIENCE LEADS US TO GIVE FULLEST CREDENCE TO BBC PREDICTION THAT DR. FOSSEY'S UNPREDICTABLE AND EMOTIONAL REACTION TO DEATH OF GORILLA COULD LAND HER IN SERIOUS TROUBLE. AMBASSADOR HAS CONSEQUENTLY BEEN IN REGULAR TOUCH WITH RWANDAN AUTHORITIES TO PLEAD FOR EFFECTIVE ACTION TO CONTROL POACHERS, AS MEANS OF PREVENTING RASH ACTIONS BY DR. FOSSEY HERSELF. TO DATE GOR REACTION HAS BEEN SYMPATHETIC AND FAVORABLE (IF INDEED INEFFECTIVE). HOWEVER, BBC REPORT OF INCIDENT INVOLVING THEIR ARREST BY ARMY AUTHORITIES SUGGESTS GOR PATIENCE WITH DR. FOSSEY HAS WORN THIN.

7. PRECEDING FOR DEPARTMENT INFO ONLY. REQUEST THAT IT BE DISCREETLY HANDLED (SUGGEST AF/C MAY WISH CONTACT AL ROYCE AT NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TO ALERT HIM). EMBASSY DOING ALL IT CAN TO AVOID INCIDENT WHICH WOULD SURELY RESULT IN ACRIMONY AND ADVERSE PUBLICITY FOR RWANDA IN U.S. AND VICE VERSA.

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